

Remarks

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for taking the time to conduct an Examiner's Interview on August 16, 2006.

Claims 1-30 and 35-44 are cancelled. Claims 46-51 have been added. Claims 46 and 47 are directed to substantially the same subject matter as previous claims 31 and 34, respectively.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 112

Claims 31-36 and 45 are rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. The rejected claims (other than claims 35-36 which have been cancelled) have been amended such that the objections relating to clarity and antecedent bases are now believed to be overcome.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 102

Claims 31, 32 and 34 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 3,255,987 to Gatch, hereafter Gatch.

Claims 31, 32, and 34 have been amended and, as amended, are believed to patentably define over Gatch since it is believed that Gatch fails to teach, let alone suggest, all of the recitations of each of these claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of these claims be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103

Claim 31, 33 and 45 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over US Patent No. 3,880,390 to Niven in view of UP Patent No. 5,595,309 to Bauer. Claim 35 is rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Niven in view of US Patent no. 4,619,430 to Hogg. Claim 36 is rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Niven in view of US Patent No. 5,267,718 to Sheehan. Claims 35 and 36 have been cancelled, and it is believed that the amendments above place the Claims 31, 33, and 45 in condition for allowance. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the rejection of these claims be withdrawn.

Newly-added Claims

The newly added claims noted above are believed to be supported by the application as originally filed, and thus no new matter has been added. The newly-added claims are believed to be drawn to patentable subject matter.

Conclusion

It is respectfully submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is earnestly solicited. The Examiner is urged to telephone the undersigned attorney if any questions should arise.

The \$395.00 filing fee due for the attached Request for Continued Examination should be charged to Deposit Account No. 23-2053. However, no extension fee is believed to be due for the filing of this preliminary amendment and response. If any such fee is in fact due, such fee should also be charged to Deposit Account 23-2053. Any required petition should be considered provisionally made.

The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's attorney should further action be deemed necessary. Otherwise, the Applicants respectfully request speedy and favorable review and consideration of the above-referenced comments and allowance of all pending claims, including the newly-added claims.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas J. Pienkos, Esq.
Registration No. 46,992

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P.O. ADDRESS:

Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek S.C.
555 East Wells Street, Suite 1900
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 273-2100
(414) 223-5000 Fax
Customer No. 22202